



COMMITTEE ON
WAYS & MEANS REPUBLICANS
RANKING MEMBER, DAVE CAMP

OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER JOHN LINDER (R-GA)
WAYS AND MEANS SUBCOMMITTEE ON INCOME SECURITY AND FAMILY SUPPORT
HEARING ON PROPOSALS TO PROVIDE FEDERAL FUNDING FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME
VISITATION PROGRAMS
JUNE 9, 2009

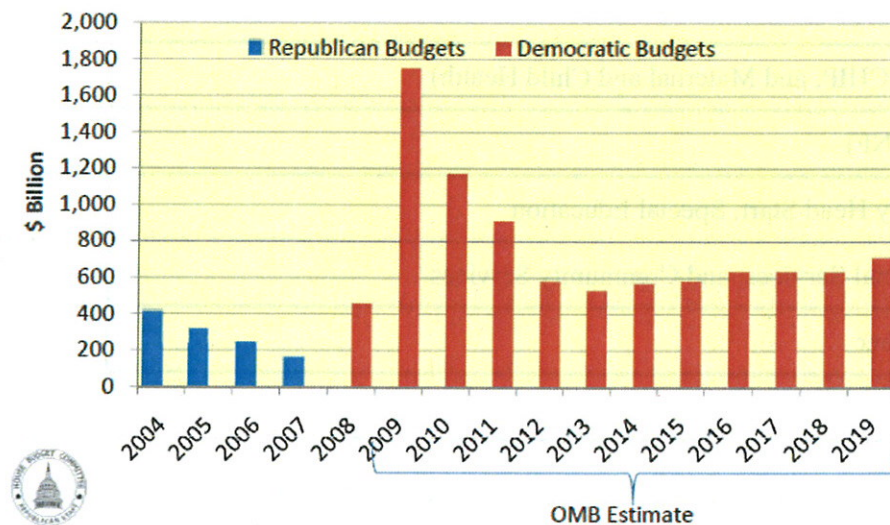
(REMARKS AS PREPARED)

Today's hearing offers a timely reminder of the difference between the fantasyland of Washington, D.C. and the reality of the rest of America.

Here in fantasyland, we'll discuss adding one more multi-billion dollar entitlement program. This would be on top of the new higher education entitlement program created this year, and of course our current health care and retirement entitlement programs, whose looming insolvency recently led President Obama to admit "we're broke."

Deficit Under Democratic Budgets

(Deficit Levels in Billions of Dollars)



But we're actually worse than broke. We're massively in debt, and it's getting deeper every day. USA Today reported last week that in 2008 the average U.S. household owed almost 550 thousand dollars in Federal debt. That's four times what the same average household owes in mortgage, car loans, credit card, and other debt combined. And that's before this year's trillion-dollar orgy of so-called stimulus spending.

-OVER-

Meanwhile, in the real world, the recession is forcing States to cut current spending. In California, the Governor proposes eliminating the welfare-to-work program and health insurance for nearly one million low-income kids. After their 2009 budgets passed, 42 States enacted emergency spending cuts, totaling 32 billion dollars.¹ These are not minor adjustments.

Yet the legislation we will discuss today breezily assumes States will find 3 billion dollars in new money over the next decade to finance their part of this new entitlement. Where will that money come from? Pixie dust?

I don't often agree with Robert Greenstein, the head of the liberal Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. But last week in the New York Times he said: "A budget tsunami is coming. That threat should be taken a hell of a lot more seriously than it is now." In the current budget crisis he "called for scrapping marginal programs to save the most essential."

Today we are ignoring that coming tsunami, and strolling along the beach contemplating another program.

Several of our witnesses will discuss how *some* home visitation programs have shown *some* positive effects. We know that from programs already operating, often with Federal and State program money. But obviously our colleagues think it's not enough, because it's never enough.

Currently Available Funding for Home Visitation (\$Billions)	
<i>Program</i>	<i>Expected FY 2010</i>
Health (Medicaid, CHIP, and Maternal and Child Health)	\$191
Cash Welfare (TANF)	\$28
Healthy Start, Early Head Start, Special Education	\$18
Child Welfare, Social Services, and Community Services	\$4
Child Care and Other	\$3
Total	\$244

But if you added up all the Federal and State funds States *could* spend on home visitation, it's an incredible 244 billion dollars per year. Obviously States don't spend all that money this way – having other priorities, or now needing to cut other priorities. So we in Washington will create a new program that forces them to. Not a program that increases child abuse prevention funds that *may* be spent on home visitation, but a program whose funds *must* be spent on home visitation, and nothing else.

And if States won't spend this money, or can't come up with their required share, the Federal cash will be given to another State. So it's Washington's way or the highway. Except the children will be the ones who will really pay when the coming budget tsunami washes this and so many other programs away.

¹ See Table 1 in <http://www.nasbo.org/Publications/PDFs/FSSpring2009.pdf>

Mr. Chairman, all of us are interested in making sure every child gets a good start in life. I support reviewing current home visitation programs that fall under the Committee's jurisdiction, and how they can be improved. However, at this time of massive and growing Federal and State deficits, I simply cannot support the creation of a new entitlement that would send another 8.5 billion dollars in unpaid for Federal spending out the door.

To help illustrate the current economic situation, in closing I ask unanimous consent to insert three documents into the record at this point.

The first is an *Associated Press* article from last week that lists the massive spending cuts under consideration in California today to bring its budget into balance.

<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/n/a/2009/06/02/state/n165424D15.DTL&type=politics>

The second is a *Wall Street Journal* article from last week titled "States' Budget Woes Are Poised to Worsen." <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB124398568837379031.html>

And the third is the latest summary of the Federal budget situation by the Congressional Budget Office, showing the Federal deficit was \$181 billion – just in the month of May.

<http://www.cbo.gov/ftpdocs/102xx/doc10259/06-2009-MBR.pdf>

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